

GLORIA'S ROMANCE

From the Motion Picture Drama of the Same Name Produced by George Kleine and Featuring Miss Billie Burke

Scenario and Novelization By Mr. and Mrs. Rupert Hughes

FOURTH EPISODE THE SOCIAL VORTEX

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GLORIA went as if blindfolded through the glittering throngs in the corridor of the Metropolitan. It was a cruel humiliation to her young heart not even to be recognized by the man she had waited for through five eternal years, the man she had loyally considered herself engaged to all that time.

But Freneau was not long in finding out his mistake. Gloria had run away from her father to run to Freneau, only to run away from him in turn. Old Stafford, looking for Gloria, encountered Freneau, shook him warmly by the hand, and asked: "Have you seen my daughter?"

Then he realized with a shock that the man Freneau was engaged to his daughter, and that the respite of five years was up. The mortgage on Gloria's heart was due. Stafford glowered at the handsome young enemy of his happiness.

But Freneau had suddenly realized that Gloria was Gloria. He made haste to pursue her. He caught her just as she paused at the door of the Stafford box and put up her absurdly small handkerchief to catch the absurdly large tears as they escaped over her pink petal cheeks.

Freneau deftly turned his slight into a compliment:

"Miss Stafford—Gloria! I was so dazzled when I saw you that I couldn't speak. You were tremendously pretty as a—kid; but now, with your hair up and all this grandeur on you—you're a goddess. And you're mine, aren't you? You're still mine!"

His impetuous charge staggered her, but she was too deeply hurt to forgive him at once. She shook her head dolefully and punished him with sorrow rather than with anger. In spite of all he could say, she slipped into the box, closed the door almost on his fingers, and vanished.

He cursed his stupidity and turned away. He joined a group of men seated in a box, among them his partner, Frank Mulry, who was beaming like a full moon wrapped up in broadcloth and white linen.

Freneau began peering about the house through his opera glasses. He fastened them on Gloria where she sat brooding bitterly. The first great meeting with her lover had failed to live up to the dreams she had been cherishing for five years.

Her father leaned over and tried to interest her in the opera.

"Boris Godunov" is my favorite opera," he said, "and Amato is in splendid form to-night."

But Gloria hardly heard the so-called orchestra or the thundering chorus. The music was little more to her than a loud wind blowing about her the ashes of her dead romance.

By and by the opera glasses went sowing idly along the boxes. They suddenly brought Freneau before her with a jump. He seemed very near and the bones of his opera glasses were like eyes staring into her own. She could not help smiling, back into his appealing smile. Indeed, when he began to signal her to meet him in the corridor she was tempted to consent. To the girl just out of school that would be a frightful adventure, more exciting than her wanderings in the Everglades and her capture by the Seminole.

She shook her head at Freneau and turned to see what her father thought of her flirtatiousness. She saw why he liked "Boris Godunov" so much. He had never slept better. Now, with her chaperon gone to dreamland, it looked to Gloria as if Providence meant that she should pursue the adventure.

She did not know that Lois Stafford, seated in David's box, was taking in these wireless signals from one side of the horseshoe to the other. She did not see how Lois glowered at Freneau's alluring grin; how fiercely she frowned when Freneau rose and left the box, and how frantic she was when Gloria arose and left hers. For Gloria, seeing Freneau go, hesitated only a moment, then rose and stole away, too, leaving her father in a peaceful slumber which all the clamors of the Russian opera could not disturb.

Outside the Stafford door Freneau waited in ambush. He was rewarded by the appearance of Gloria. He was so delighted that when she asked him why he had motioned to her to meet him he could think of nothing better to say than: "I thought you

might be hungry. There's the buffet upstairs."

Gloria smiled and understood and accepted the challenge. She said she was famished. The corridors and the massive stairway were empty at this time and they scampered up to the refreshment room like children.

Gloria was enchanted by the array of cakes and became hungry in the presence of the feast. She poked her finger at the most toothsome.

"Give me this, give me this: one of these, two of those, and a chocolate and pistache ice cream—and some lemonade."

Love had evidently not ruined her young appetite.

Freneau led her to a table and they began to renew old acquaintance. She renewed her five-year-old expression of gratitude to him for rescuing her from the Indians, and he had neither

the courage nor the honesty to admit that it was not he but Doctor Royce who had fought the chief to a death. Freneau and Gloria had many things to discuss, but he did not tell her all the mischief he had been up to in the five years' test. That went without saying. They did not know that the room filled up with a chattering mob when the curtain went down, nor that the chattering mob disappeared when the curtain went up again.

Gloria prattled on, munching her cakes and ice and sipping her lemonade. Suddenly she felt her ear seized in a familiar grasp. Her father had wakened with a start when the orchestra stopped playing. He had blinked about in the sudden bright lights and missed his daughter. She was lost in the mazes of the opera house. He was tempted to offer a reward for her, as he had when she decamped into the Everglades.

He decided to search first for her himself. He found the stray in the deserted buffet, spooning up the last of her ice cream and the best of Freneau's pastries. He dragged her out of heaven. She fought him all the way down the stairs, but he would not let her go. He would not let Freneau come near.

At the next intermission her father tagged along like a younger brother. Before she could get to Freneau, her sister-in-law, Lois, captured him. Lois rebuked Freneau for his attentions to Gloria and reminded him of his oaths of fidelity to her own faithful self. He made light of his interest in Gloria and was avowing his devotion to Lois when her husband appeared at her elbow.

They masked their confusion as best they could and Freneau sauntered



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away. David glowered after him and glared at his wife. He had not forgotten that Freneau had been his rival for Lois's fickle heart before they were married. He did not dream how deeply she was involved with Freneau now; but the first seed of suspicion was sown. Lois's father, Judge Freeman, had not forgotten Lois's early infatuation for the young broker, who had a gift of making women reckless. He saw how David was miffed. He saw also how Gloria tried to reach Freneau, only to lose him in the crowd. The Judge was trained in observing human nature. He even ventured to speak to Gloria. "I wouldn't think too much of that Freneau fellow if I were you, Gloria."

"But you aren't me, are you, Judge?" Gloria answered impudently, and the Judge retired, mumbling: "No! I'll have to admit that!"

Then Pierpont came up and compelled Gloria to go back and listen to mere opera, when she wanted to hear Freneau's glorious voice. When the last curtain fell and the multitude flooded the corridors she did not get a glimpse of him. Her father kept watch over her and Gloria went home amazed at the cantankerous meddlingness of parents in love affairs.

She told her father that he ought to be in better business than playing the demon chaperon, but he only smiled. She was all he had and he wanted to keep her to the last moment. He wanted also to make some investigation of Freneau's behavior and his reliability as a son-in-law. He had not

heard much about him, but that little was not good.

The next day a rescuer appeared in unexpected guise. Her aunt, the great Hortensia Stafford, called to see her, raved over her beauty and hailed her as a graduate from the ranks of girlhood.

"You must have a coming-out party," she said, "and take up the duties of womanhood."

Pierpont violently insisted that Gloria was only a child. But he was only a father and merely a brother to Hortensia, so she waved him aside as a nuisance. Gloria embraced her fervently and thought her an angel.

She changed her mind when it came to sending out the invitations for the debut, for Aunt Hortensia was a stickler for social selectness and she loved to blue pencil doubtful names.

Gloria made out a list of those she wanted. There were dozens of girl friends and a few young men she had known from childhood. She wrote among these the name of Richard Freneau with loving flourish. Aunt Hortensia ran him through with one straight thrust of her deadly blue pencil. Gloria protested, but Hortensia answered:

"I don't know him. I don't wish to know him. You have no time to know him. Who is he?"

When Gloria started to tell her she would not listen, and Pierpont had one cheerful moment. Gloria, however, would not let her lover be snubbed so arrantly. She knew that argument with this imperative relative was worse than useless, so she merely nodded her head in obedience and set about to circumvent her, flitting about again while her aunt returned to her own list. Gloria annexed an invitation, an envelope and a pen, and the deed was done. An invitation to Mr. Richard Freneau reposed in the basket with those all ready for the mail, and with elaborate innocence Gloria danced over to her ignorant relation.

When that invitation was received at the office of Freneau & Mulry it seemed like a message from heaven to the almost broken brokers. The business was in fearful shape and they were about ready to close up shop unless some miracle should occur to tide them over.

Mulry had been paeing the floor, discussing ways and means; Freneau was disgustedly beating a tattoo on the desk when the office boy entered with the mail. On the top lay the large envelope. Opening it, Freneau read that Mr. Pierpont Stafford and Miss Gloria Stafford requested the pleasure of his company at a debut dance on a certain afternoon.

Freneau proudly showed to Lois.

Mulry blew a long whistle and said: "What right have you got to get this?"

"I saved her life," Freneau replied. Mulry laughed. "Ah, go on." When Freneau told his version of the story,

vividly describing how little Gloria had been lost in the Everglades of Florida and taken prisoner by a tribe of Seminoles, and how Freneau had tracked her through the wilderness and saved her from the young chief who was determined to make the girl his squaw, Freneau's language had all the vividness that only fiction achieves. But Mulry still laughed:

"You never saved a kitten from a puddle." He knew Freneau.

Freneau was furious, but Mulry looked him up and down with a contemptuous admiration. Then, sobering quickly and, taking the invitation from Freneau's hand, he slapped him on the back and said:

"The main thing is that she thinks you saved her, so it's her turn to save you. Marry her quick! We can borrow a big wad on your father-in-law's mere name."

Freneau saw the point and promised. His triumphant smile did not last long.

His mind shifted back and forth like a shuttlecock, weighing all the chances. There was his entanglement with Lois. What a double-dyed fool he had been to flirt with Gloria's sister-in-law! How very careless of him! She might spoil everything. She would be bound to see and know something of his courtship.

He felt sure he could win Gloria over again as he had won her heart five years before, provided he could still pose in the light of a courageous and faithful suitor. But Lois must be kept from ruining everything. His best chance lay in speed, he thought, and his ability to keep Lois quiet.

His face cleared and his most charming smile was turned to Mulry. "All right. We'll marry her."

Standing at the head of the famous Stafford stair, in line with her aunt, her girl friends, and Lois, was the most exquisite debutante of the season. Aunt Hortensia had seen many in her long life, but she heaved a small, polite sigh of great pride and contentment as she glanced over the imperious young figure at her side.

Miss Stafford had insisted that simplicity be the keynote of her niece's attire at this afternoon reception in her honor, but the cunning of the dressmaker had contrived to cause the appearance of simplicity over a most complicated study in beauty line. Yet above the wealth of fabric the joyous youth of Gloria shone forth transcendent.

The house was so filled with flowers sent by admiring friends and hopeful suitors that the affair was like a merry-making in the gigantic conservatory. At the foot of the steps stood a footman, resplendent in powdered hair, with silk stockings,

red velvet coat, and knee breeches. At the edge of the receiving line the old butler, Griggs, kept calling each guest's name clearly and distinctly, so that the hostesses need not puzzle their wits over who was who.

Gloria's heart pounded proudly beneath her chiffons. It was not half bad to be a young queen in one's own palace and at last to be considered a real part of it. Yet as guest after guest was presented she gave each only an instant's graciousness, and her ears strained for the magical name of her idol, Freneau.

He was the man of men, but a sudden shyness overwhelmed her. Her betrothal to him had not been ratified again, and she was afraid to let every one see her choose him. Her humid eyes caught sight of her father, who was smiling in the hope that there was security in numbers. She made a dive at him and made him her beau. Everybody admired her tactful choice; but Pierpont knew more about investments than about the fox trot, and he had more rheumatism in his muscles than grace. He made a sorry figure in the crowd of dancers, and finally collapsed in Royce's arms. Gloria giggled.

"I turn him over to you, doctor," Royce laughed till he saw that she surrendered herself to Freneau. Then he frowned. He was in a miserable dilemma. He could see that Freneau cast a spell over the young soul of Gloria, and he knew him to be unworthy of the girl's trust. Royce knew that Freneau was a cad. He had stolen from Royce the fruits of his victory over the Indian chief. Royce had fought for Gloria and for his own life while Freneau carried her off. And now Royce wanted to save her from Freneau as he had saved her from the Seminole. But, alas! this was quite another matter, for Gloria did not want to be saved. Royce could not bring himself to declaring the truth of the matter, for he could not endure to exploit his own prowess. He knew enough of the world, too, to know that if he went to Gloria with criticism of her cavalier he would only add to Freneau's charm of persecution. He was in the presence of a complication of dangerous symptoms, and he did not know how to act to prevent their developing into a plague of troubles. He could only do what he could to keep Freneau assured that his conquest of the young girl's heart would not be opposed.

Suddenly a careless glance at Lois gave him a start. She was in such distress that he moved to her to offer his help. She was watching Freneau dance with Gloria. She saw how content they were together and her heart turned sick. But before Royce could reach her a determined youth cut in on Gloria's dance with Freneau and dragged her from his arms for the rest of the dance. Then Freneau hurried to Lois.

Instantly Lois was better, smiling once more, for now it was she whom Freneau encircled with his arm and piloted through the skipping and gliding traffic on the ballroom floor. Freneau held Lois tightly and whispered to her honeyed lies. He ex-

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have meant a fortune to any girl. Gloria tried to dodge the gnat-like suitors: "May I have this dance. The next? The one after that, then?" They followed among the pillars about the ballroom floor. They cornered her at last, and Doctor Royce confronted her. She was about to take him in desperation when she saw Freneau at her shoulder.

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plained that he had to be polite to his hostesses and that Gloria was a dear child, but, of course, she was nothing to him, while Lois was all in all. And Lois believed.

Bad women are, of course, bigger fools than good women; otherwise they would be wise enough to be good. But, being fools, it is not strange, perhaps, that they should be so easily fooled. They can seldom believe or disbelieve truly. The intuition upon which they so confidently rely constantly plays them false, and before they become the servant of wish.

That dance over, the god-like young heart breaker betook himself again to the trail and followed the Stafford millions.

Gloria had had enough of the guests. She wished that they would all go home. Instead, they were still pouring in. The slam of the doors of their cars could be heard even here, as motor after motor rolled up, emptied its human contents on the marble steps and rolled away.

What Gloria wanted now was a solitude for two. Freneau was more than willing. Seeing a young man coming to whom she had promised several dances and given none, Gloria fled among the crowd, motioning Freneau to follow. She led the way through the dense wilderness of the conservatory to a marble bench, appropriately placed at the foot of a fountain where a little old marble cupid presided. The trying place was evidently popular, for Gloria flushed one brace of plover when she parted the branches.

She did not recognize the young man and woman who hurried away, but she understood their longing for quiet and would have apologized if they had lingered. But now that they were gone she smiled at Freneau and invited him to sit beside her.

"This is the nearest to the Everglades we have," she said.

He lost no time in preambles. He began: "Gloria, dear, I've waited five years for this moment, and I want you to know that my heart has never for one moment—"

There was a rustle of palm leaves and the swish of skirts. Some one was invading their Eden. He sighed: "No hope!"

Gloria whispered: "Never mind; come out to our country place to-morrow and I'll take you for a sleigh ride behind my pines. And I'll drive."

Freneau chuckled as he understood. He drew closer to the delectable witch, only to see over her shoulder the eyes of an earlier witch.

It was Lois. Fearing that Gloria might see her she retreated. But Doctor Royce had followed too, and he had seen Lois's face as she watched the lovers. He understood now the fever that he had noted on her face a while before. He understood too that he had an ally in his battle against Freneau's prosperity with Gloria—not an altogether desirable ally, but all allies are welcome in love or war. And this was both.

(To Be Continued.)



"GLORIA, DEAR," SAID FRENEAU, "I'VE WAITED FIVE YEARS FOR THIS MOMENT."



FRENEAU LED HER TO A TABLE AND THEY BEGAN TO RENEW OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

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